

OVERBOARD

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Jonah 4.5-11 | February 23, 2020
Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we conclude our series in the Book of Jonah. In a story well known for a ship and a storm and a fish, we turn our attention to a makeshift shelter, a fast-growing plant, and a little worm. What in the world is going on here!?

II. Connecting with One Another

What is most important to you? How do you think your family, friends, co-workers or neighbors would answer that question? Why?

III. Study the Text

- a. At the outset of our study seven weeks ago, we read through the whole book of Jonah in one sitting (hey, it's only 48 verses!). Let's do so again, even as we turn our attention to the final verses of this book.

How has your perception of this story changed since we began engaging it in early January? How has God spoken through this story to you personally?

- b. Read **Jonah 4.5**.

Recalling Jonah's message to Nineveh in chapter 3, why do you think he has now gone out of the city? What is he waiting for!?

What is the significance of his travelling "east"? (see **Genesis 3.24** for a hint!)

- c. The "shelter" Jonah builds is a *sukkah*, the same kind of rustic, makeshift house built annually by the Jewish community during the Festival of Booths (also known as the Feast of Tabernacles), which celebrated when the Israelites were liberated from Egypt and journeyed to the Promised Land. This yearly festival reminded God's people of His protection in the wilderness, their reliance on His law, and His command to welcome Gentiles, strangers, and foreigners.

Considering each of those things, why do you think it was important for the author to let us know this was a *sukkah*? What are the connections with the story of Jonah?

- d. Read **Jonah 4.6-8**.

In the same way that He "appointed" a fish in 1.17, God now appoints a plant, a worm, and a wind.



How does Jonah respond to the plant? How does he respond to the worm and the wind? Where does God fit into His responses, if at all?

e. Why do you think God continued to orchestrate such events in Jonah's life? What is God hoping for?

f. Think of times in your life when God provided for you.

When was it exactly what you wanted? When was it different than you expected?

How did such differences in your desires affect the way you responded?

g. The plant was a common symbol for Davidic lineage and Messianic prophecy (see such metaphorical language in **Isaiah 6.13, 11.1, 60.21** and **61.3**, for instance).

How does this further explain Jonah's emotional reaction?

h. Read **Jonah 4.9-11**.

These verses reveal how the plant, the worm, and the wind were provided by God as an enacted parable. What point is God trying to make? Does Jonah "get it"? Why or why not?

i. Where are God's priorities clarified in these verses?

Make a list of things that are important to you. How important are they to God?

j. Read **Deuteronomy 10.12, Micah 6.8, Matthew 6.26-33, Mark 12.28-34, 1st Timothy 2.1-4** and **2nd Peter 3.9**.

According to these verses, what matters most to God?

How can you be sure you prioritize what God prioritizes? How can prayer help you distinguish between the two?

k. Author Josh Hunt writes, "The reason unbelievers don't want to come to God is because they don't believe God is good. They don't believe it would be good for them to follow God... The reason believers struggle with the demands of discipleship is the same. They don't believe – really believe – God is good. They don't believe – really believe – it is in their best interest to fully and whole-heartedly live the Christian life."

How have you seen the truth of that quote in your own life?

l. In Sunday's worship gatherings, we will hear from **Luke 15.11-32**.

How has Jonah been like each of the two sons? Which of the two do you most identify with? Why?

IV. Pray

a. Lift up the mission of Good Shepherd, that we would indeed *invite all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God's family*,

b. Ask God to reveal any way in which you have, like Jonah, drifted from God's purposes in your life.

